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- ART. V.—1. *Religio Medici, A Letter to a Friend, Christian Morals, Urn-Burial, and Other Papers.* By SIR THOMAS BROWNE, K.T., M. D. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1862. 16mo. pp. xviii. and 440.
2. *The Works of SIR THOMAS BROWNE. Including his Unpublished Correspondence, and a Memoir.* Edited by SIMON WILKIN, F. L. S. London: W. Pickering. 1836. 4 vols. 8vo.

THE writings of Sir Thomas Browne are but little known in this country. No American edition of his complete works has ever been published; and probably few persons even among those most familiar with English literature have read any of his productions, except the “*Religio Medici*,” and perhaps the tracts on “*Christian Morals*” and on “*Urn-Burial*.” Yet his name is generally recognized as one of the greatest in the literary history of the seventeenth century. He was not merely a close student of nature, and a skilful and thoroughly educated physician, enjoying a large reputation among his contemporaries; but he was also a ripe scholar in several departments of literature, a sound and ingenious reasoner, and an eloquent writer. For these reasons, among others, we are glad to see so copious a selection from his works as this now before us, for which we are indebted to the taste and judgment of Mr. James T. Fields, one of the publishers of the volume. For the preparation of such a volume Mr. Fields is peculiarly qualified by his long and intimate acquaintance with the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, and by his hearty appreciation of their learning and eloquence, their wit and wisdom. It is perhaps needless to repeat here what was said in a notice of this edition in our last number, but we cannot refrain from adding, that the editor has performed his task in a manner worthy of very high praise. He has brought together nearly everything from Browne’s writings which an ordinary reader will care to possess; he has bestowed much care on the text; he has made a judicious selection from the notes of previous editors; and he has prefixed a graceful memoir from his own pen. In his endeavor to produce an edition of Sir Thomas

Browne's miscellaneous works which shall satisfy every demand of the most fastidious critic, he has been skilfully seconded by the conductors of the University Press at Cambridge ; and it is not too much to say that the book is in every respect worthy of their well-established reputation as tasteful and accurate printers, and is one of the choicest specimens of American typography. More than this we need not add : less than this we cannot write of a volume which we have examined with unmixed satisfaction.

To those who desire a complete copy of Browne's writings, the edition prepared by Mr. Simon Wilkin, and first published about twenty-five years ago, is still indispensable. This edition was the result of more than ten years of careful study and research, and is an honorable monument to the patient industry of the editor. It comprises, with the exception of a few unimportant papers, everything which Browne is known to have written, collated with several original manuscripts, and illustrated by a numerous body of notes, together with editorial prefaces to the various works, Dr. Johnson's memoir of the author, and a supplementary memoir by the editor. Nothing which a strong admiration of the author's character and writings could suggest as likely to add value to this edition was omitted by Mr. Wilkin ; and it is not probable that a more comprehensive or a more richly annotated edition will ever be published.

Beside these and the early editions of Browne's writings there have been several excellent editions of the "*Religio Medici*," and of some of his minor productions, both in England and in this country, — among which may be named those of Mr. J. A. St. John and Mr. Henry Gardiner in England, and of the late Rev. Alexander Young of this city ; but it does not fall within our present design to speak of their distinctive characteristics, though it is impossible to omit all reference to them.

The life of Sir Thomas Browne has little to distinguish it from the lives of other physicians. Though he lived during the memorable period of the English Revolution, and was a staunch royalist, he took but a small part in public affairs ; and the interest which we feel in his personal history is derived

from our acquaintance with his inner life, rather than from any events in his social experience. It will be in accordance with our purpose in this article, however, to consider his writings under the light which is reflected on them from his life and character.

His biographers have not been able to discover any particulars in regard to his ancestry except the facts that his paternal grandfather belonged to an old and respectable family in Upton, Cheshire, and that his father was engaged in trade as a mercer in Cheapside, London. Here Thomas, who was the youngest of four children, was born on the 19th of October, 1605. Shortly afterward his father died, leaving a considerable fortune for those days, of which nearly two thousand pounds are said to have fallen to the share of the youngest son; but this sum was soon lost by the dishonesty of one of his guardians. He was, nevertheless, sent at an early age to the grammar school at Winchester, founded by Lord Chancellor Wykeham, from which he was removed in the beginning of 1623 to Pembroke College, Oxford. Three years afterward he received his degree as Bachelor of Arts, being, as one of his biographers remarks, the first man of eminence graduated at this College. In 1629 he was made Master of Arts, and about the same time he began the practice of medicine in Oxfordshire. Here he is supposed to have remained about two years; and at the expiration of that period he accompanied his mother's second husband to Ireland. Finding little to interest him among the Irish, he next visited the Continent, and spent some time in travel and study in France, Italy, and Holland. In the latter country he seems to have remained long enough to attend the medical lectures in the University of Leyden, from which institution he received his diploma as Doctor of Medicine.

On his return to England, when he was about twenty-eight years old, he established himself as a physician at Shipden Hall, near Halifax. While he was engaged in his profession at this place, according to some accounts, he wrote the "*Religio Medici*"; but if this statement is correct, it is probable that considerable additions were made to the work during the seven or eight years which elapsed before it was printed. In

1637, he was induced by his friends to remove to Norwich; and in July of the same year "he was incorporated Doctor of Physic, in Oxford." In 1641, being then in his thirty-sixth year, he married Dorothy, fourth daughter of Edward Mileham, Esq., an influential gentleman of the neighborhood. By this lady he had twelve children, the eldest of whom, Dr. Edward Browne, acquired a high reputation for his scientific attainments, and, not long before his father's death, was made physician to Charles II. Another son entered the navy, and on several occasions gave evidence of much courage and skill. To this circumstance may be ascribed the interest which Sir Thomas seems to have taken in the accounts of naval battles, and his evident fondness for the sea.

The year following his marriage is memorable in his history for the surreptitious publication of the "*Religio Medici*." This work had been previously circulated somewhat extensively in manuscript, and several transcripts slightly differing from one another are still extant. From one of these copies the first edition was printed, as Browne himself avows, without the knowledge or consent of the author. The book was rapidly sold, and soon attracted the favorable notice of the Earl of Dorset, who strongly commended it in a letter to his friend, Sir Kenelm Digby, a writer of considerable reputation in his own age, but now best known as the unfortunate lover of Venetia Stanley. The result of Digby's examination of the volume was the preparation of certain strictures, which are now commonly printed as an Appendix to Browne's essay. Immediately on learning that his critic intended to publish these observations, Browne addressed a letter to him stating that the piece was written for himself, "rather than as an exercitation for another," and had been very incorrectly printed, but that within a few weeks he should "deliver unto the press the true and intended original." Accordingly, in 1643, he published, in a small octavo volume of a hundred and ninety pages, the first acknowledged edition of the "*Religio Medici*." Since that time more than twenty editions have appeared in England and in this country; and at a very early period the work was translated into Latin, French, Dutch, German, and Italian.

From the great variety of subjects discussed in the essay, and the want of method in their arrangement, as well as from the numerous personal details which are mixed up with the main argument, it is extremely difficult to give a satisfactory analysis of it, or to characterize it in general terms; and it is perhaps scarcely necessary to make the attempt. We may remark, however, that the discourse is divided into two parts, the first treating of Faith and its objects, and the second setting forth the importance of Charity, in the large sense in which St. Paul used the word. Among the themes discussed in the first part are the folly of disputes in religion, the wisdom and eternity of God, the inconsistency of unbelief, the nature and evidence of miracles, the feelings with which death should be regarded, the resurrection and day of judgment, and other cognate subjects. In the second part the author considers the motives of charity, its objects, the various forms in which it is exhibited, and its rewards. Paradoxical in expression, and with "an appearance of vacillation and irresoluteness," which, as Mr. Hallam justly observes, "probably represents the real state" of its author's mind, the book is nevertheless one of the most delightful and suggestive productions of its kind in the language; and it well deserves the popularity which it has enjoyed for more than two hundred years. Over both of its divisions are thrown the charms of learning, wit, and eloquence, joined with much intellectual acuteness, and a spirit of sincere devotion. Yet in his Preface Sir Thomas writes, that from his first putting pen to paper he did not have access to any good book to promote his invention or to relieve his memory. In respect to style it is superior to either of his later works. In different parts of it occur many incidental remarks, which throw light on the character of his mind, and the extent of his acquirements at this period of his life. For instance, at the very outset he writes:—

"I am, I confess, naturally inclined to that which misguided zeal terms superstition. My common conversation I do acknowledge austere, my behavior full of rigor, sometimes not without morosity; yet at my devotion I love to use the civility of my knee, my hat, and hand, with all those outward and sensible motions which may express or promote my invisible devotion. I should violate my own arm rather than

a church ; nor willingly deface the name of saint or martyr. At the sight of a cross or crucifix I can dispense with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour. I cannot laugh at, but rather pity, the fruitless journeys of pilgrims, or condemn the miserable condition of friars ; for though misplaced in circumstances, there is something in it of devotion. I could never hear the Ave Mary bell without an elevation ; or think it a sufficient warrant, because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all, that is, in silence and dull contempt : whilst therefore they directed their devotions to her, I offered mine to God, and rectified the errors of their prayers, by rightly ordering mine own. At a solemn procession I have wept abundantly, while my consorts, blind with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an access of scorn and laughter."

Again, near the close of the essay, he writes : —

"For my own part, besides the jargon and *patois* of several provinces, I understand no less than six languages ; yet I protest I have no higher conceit of myself than had our fathers before the confusion of Babel, when there was but one language in the world, and none to boast himself either linguist or critic. I have not only seen several countries, beheld the nature of their climes, the chorography of their provinces, topography of their cities, but understood their several laws, customs, and policies ; yet cannot all this persuade the dulness of my spirit unto such an opinion of myself as I behold in nimbler and conceited heads, that never looked a degree beyond their nests. I know the names, and somewhat more, of all the constellations in my horizon ; yet I have seen a prating mariner, that could only name the pointers and the north star, out-talk me, and conceit himself a whole sphere above me. I know most of the plants of my country, and of those about me ; yet methinks I do not know so many as when I did but know a hundred, and had scarcely ever simplified further than Cheap-side."

The animadversions of Sir Kenelm Digby, as we have already remarked, were based on an imperfect copy of the work, and were composed within a little more than twenty-four hours after receiving the volume ; but with some slight qualifications they are not less applicable to the essay in the shape in which it is familiar to us. They are for the most part metaphysical in character, and are sometimes ingenious and pointed, though too often vague and unsatisfactory. While Digby, who was a recent convert to Romanism, recognizes the learning and

eloquence of the book, and admits that the author "showeth a great deal of judicious piety in making a right use of the blind zeal that bigots lose themselves in," he stoutly assails Browne's orthodoxy in respect to several doctrines of the Church and the schools, but he does not directly charge him with indulging in atheistical speculations.

The charge of an atheistical tendency was, however, early and often brought against the book, and though no one now pretends that it has any solid foundation, it is not difficult to discover the grounds on which such a charge may be based. In a work not originally designed for publication, but intended merely as an exercise for himself, it was natural that a writer so egotistical and so outspoken should give free expression to every doubt by which he might be even momentarily assailed. This he undoubtedly did; but it is certain from his own language that these casual expressions are not to be regarded as the statement of deliberately formed opinions. The book, he writes in his Preface, "was set down many years past, and was the sense of my conception at that time, not an immutable law unto my advancing judgment at all times; and therefore there might be many things therein plausible unto my passed apprehension, which are not agreeable unto my present self. There are many things delivered rhetorically, many expressions therein merely tropical, and as they best illustrate my intention; and therefore also there are many things to be taken in a soft and flexible sense, and not to be called unto the rigid test of reason." Again, in the "*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*," he writes that it is "reasonable for every man to vary his opinion according to the variance of his reason, and to affirm one day what he denied another." That he had no sympathy with any form of blank denial is equally clear from his own explicit declarations. "Atheism is the greatest falsity," he writes, "and to affirm there is no God, the highest lie in nature." It is also to be observed, that his doubts are almost without exception on points of minor importance, while the whole tenor of his writings shows that he was a firm believer in the essential truths of Christianity. He even went so far as to place on record the declaration that he thought there "are not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith."

Undoubtedly in respect to the experimental sciences he was inclined to question every fact which had not been clearly proved, or which did not in his opinion rest on irrefragable authority ; but he was not disposed to carry this sceptical habit of mind into the domain of religious thought. Here he was more the victim of superstition than of scepticism ; and his gravest scientific errors may be traced to his belief that they are taught in the Bible.

Four years after the appearance of the first edition of the "*Religio Medici*," Browne again came before the world as an author, and published the first fruits of his scientific researches, under the title of "*Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into very many received Tenets and commonly presumed Truths, which examined prove but Vulgar and Common Errors.*" This is by far the most elaborate of his productions, and though it is now but little known, it must always stand as a splendid monument to his erudition and his earnest love of truth. It is, indeed, open to criticism in several respects. Many of the opinions advanced are crude and unfounded ; words are of frequent recurrence which are now excluded from respectable society ; and questions are freely discussed which are not now mooted outside of a medical college, or which are too puerile to deserve serious consideration. But the method throughout shows that the author relied in scientific matters on actual experiment, rather than on the commonly received opinions, and that he brought to his task a mind of great acuteness. As Mr. Buckle observes, though perhaps with somewhat of exaggeration, — " This able and learned production has the merit of anticipating some of those results which more modern inquirers have obtained ; but it is chiefly remarkable as being the first systematic and deliberate onslaught ever made in England upon those superstitious fancies which were then prevalent respecting the external world."

The work is divided into seven Books, of various degrees of interest and ability, but each of them containing much curious and instructive matter. The First Book forms a general introduction, and treats of the causes of common errors, which are unfolded in eleven chapters. Among these causes are included the common infirmity of human nature, false de-

duction, credulity and supinity, the obstinate adherence unto antiquity and authority, and Satan, the chief promoter of false opinions. The next two Books are devoted to an examination of various popular, but erroneous, notions concerning mineral and vegetable bodies and concerning animals. The Fourth Book treats of some popular errors respecting the physical structure of man, and of other cognate topics. The Fifth Book comprises strictures on the manner in which various objects or events are commonly represented in pictures, and on a few popular customs and opinions, as that uninstructed children would naturally speak the primitive language of the world, and the like. The next Book deals with some curious, though still less important questions, "cosmographical, geographical, and historical," as, for instance, to what circumstance the Red Sea owes its name, why negroes are black, and whether the world was thinly peopled before the flood. The last Book relates mainly to questions of Scriptural interpretation, such as the popular notion that there was no rainbow before the flood, that the Tower of Babel was erected against a second deluge, and to questions in profane history.

Many of the questions thus discussed are extremely trivial, and from their general character it is not surprising that the book is much less eloquent and much less attractive to the great majority of readers than the "*Religio Medici*." But even if the writer's plan had permitted much scope to his imagination, his frequent introduction of new words needlessly derived from Latin roots would still have been a scarcely less serious blemish on his style than his frequent obscurity. It was his first intention, indeed, to print his observations in Latin, and in the Preface he makes some remarks on style, which may be cited in this connection, as showing the theory on which his later writings are composed.

"Our first intentions," he writes, "considering the common interest of truth, resolved to propose it unto the Latin republic and equal judges of Europe, but, owing in the first place this service unto our country, and therein especially unto its ingenuous gentry, we have declared ourselves in a language best conceived. Although I confess the quality of the subject will sometimes carry us into expressions beyond mere

English apprehensions. And, indeed, if elegancy still proceedeth, and English pens maintain that stream we have of late observed to flow from many, we shall, within few years, be fain to learn Latin to understand English, and a work will prove of equal facility in either."

Fortunately for the purity of the language, this Babylonish dialect, as it has been very happily called, has found few admirers; and even Dr. Johnson, whose style was vitiated by his admiration of Sir Thomas Browne's writings, is compelled to admit that it is "a tissue of many languages, a mixture of heterogeneous words, brought together from distant regions, with terms originally applied to one art, and drawn by violence into the service of another."

The publication of the "*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*" gave Browne a great reputation both at home and abroad; and the work was soon translated into Dutch, German, and French. In England several editions were called for, in most of which much new matter was incorporated; and during the next ten or twelve years he appears to have been engaged in frequent correspondence with learned men, and to have added largely to his stores of recondite knowledge. In 1658 he published another volume, comprising two of his most celebrated works: "*Hydriotaphia; Urn-Burial; or, a Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns lately found in Norfolk*"; and "*The Garden of Cyrus; or the Quincuncial Lozenge, or Net-Work Plantations of the Ancients, artificially, naturally, mystically considered.*" The first of these is one of the best-known and most popular of his productions, and has been more frequently reprinted than any of his other writings, except the "*Religio Medici.*" As Dr. Johnson observes in his memoir of Browne, — "There is perhaps none of his works which better exemplifies his reading or memory. It is scarcely to be imagined how many particulars he has amassed together in a treatise which seems to have been occasionally written, and for which, therefore, no materials could have been previously collected." With a profusion of learning, he describes the funeral rites celebrated among the nations of antiquity, and the various methods of cremation or burial adopted by them, with numerous impressive and admirable remarks on immortality and the fear of death. The work abounds in passages of grand and solemn eloquence,

relieved occasionally by a lighter tone, and must always stand at the head of the special department of literature to which it belongs. "The Garden of Cyrus" is a more fanciful production, and is perhaps the most curious of Browne's writings. With a perverse ingenuity which has never been surpassed, he finds a quincuncial arrangement everywhere in nature and art, and in every part of the essay he exhibits the amplitude of his learning and the liveliness of his fancy. It must be confessed, however, that the book is more curious than valuable, and that its most splendid bursts of eloquence have very little connection with the subject of which he treats. Many of the most eloquent passages, indeed, might be readily transferred to the "Religio Medici," or to the "Hydriotaphia," without any apparent violence to the context.

These two works were the last that were published during Browne's life; but he did not remain idle. Beside carrying on an extensive correspondence on scientific questions, and making numerous experiments, he composed and carefully revised several minor essays, which were found in manuscript after his death, and subsequently printed. But of his personal history during this part of his life very little is known. One authentic anecdote, however, has been preserved, which shows that, notwithstanding his deservedly high reputation as a man of science, he cherished some very absurd notions. Among these was a firm belief in demonology and witchcraft. "For my part," he writes in the "Religio Medici," "I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of this do not only deny them, but spirits: and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort, not of infidels, but atheists." Accordingly, in the famous trial of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender before Sir Matthew Hale, in 1664, he was summoned as an expert in demonology. On this occasion he gave a decided opinion that the defendants had practised witchcraft, adding, that "in Denmark there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons by conveying pins into them, with needles and nails." This testimony, it is believed, decided the case; and since that time there has been no execution for witchcraft in England.

His unfortunate testimony in this case did not, however, prevent his receiving a diploma as an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, in the following year; and six years afterward, on occasion of a visit of Charles II. to Norwich, he was knighted by that monarch. These honors were, indeed, only the visible expression of the respect in which his scientific attainments were universally held. Of his home at this period we have a pleasant sketch by John Evelyn, who, in October, 1672, visited Norwich on purpose to see "that famous scholar and physician, Dr. T. Browne."

"Next morning," he writes, in his Diary, "I went to see Sir Thomas Browne (with whom I had sometime corresponded, though I had never seen him before); his whole house and garden being a paradise and cabinet of rarities, and that of the best collection, especially medals, books, plants, and natural things. Amongst other curiosities, Sir Thomas had a collection of the eggs of all the fowl and birds he could procure, that country (especially the promontory of Norfolk) being frequented, as he said, by several kinds which seldom or never go farther into the land, as cranes, storks, eagles, and variety of water-fowl. He led me to see all the remarkable places of this ancient city, being one of the largest, and certainly, after London, one of the noblest of England, for its venerable cathedral, number of stately churches, cleanness of the streets, and buildings of flint so exquisitely headed and squared, as I was much astonished at; but he told me they had lost the art of squaring the flints, in which they so much excelled, and of which the churches, best houses, and walls are built."

Here, in the prosecution of his scientific and literary studies, and in the assiduous practice of his profession, the closing years of his life glided away, unmarked by any outward occurrences, except such as belong to the experience of most persons of mature years. His death occurred on the 19th of October, 1682, the anniversary of his birth, and was occasioned by an attack of colic, which terminated fatally after a short and severe illness. "Some of his last words," says Dr. Johnson, on the authority of Whitefoot, "were expressions of submission to the will of God, and fearlessness of death." He was buried in the church of St. Peter Mancroft, at Norwich, and a mural monument was placed on the south pillar of the altar by his wife, who survived him about three years. Of

their large family of children only one son and three daughters were living at the time of his death.

Not long after this event the first selection from his manuscripts was published by Archbishop Tenison, under the title of "Miscellany Tracts." It consists of thirteen essays, several of which were probably intended for a new edition of the "Pseudodoxia Epidemica." Among them are papers on certain plants mentioned in the Bible, on the "fishes eaten by our Saviour with his Disciples after his resurrection from the dead," on hawks and falconry, on languages, on the situation of certain places mentioned in Scripture, and on the Oracle of Delphos. The last piece in the collection, and, so far as we know, the only purely comic piece ever written by Sir Thomas Browne, is entitled "Musæum Clausum, or Bibliotheca Abscondita: containing some remarkable Books, Antiquities, Pictures, and Rarities of several Kinds, scarce or never seen by any Man now living." As its title indicates, it is an amusing catalogue of imaginary books, pictures, and curiosities, which no one can read without a smile at the sharp wit of the writer who thus satirizes some of the absurd notions current at the time when the list was drawn up.

A few years afterward, in 1690, his son, Dr. Edward Browne, brought to light, and published in a folio pamphlet, another little essay, entitled "A Letter to a Friend upon Occasion of the Death of his intimate Friend." This production has all the peculiarities of Browne's style and habits of thought, and we are glad to see that it has been included in Mr. Fields's selection. Its philosophical tone, its curious erudition, and its occasional passages of animated eloquence, render it one of the most attractive of his minor writings. It is professedly addressed to a particular person on a special occasion, but it constantly passes from the statement of an individual experience to the discussion of more comprehensive themes and broader relations.

In 1712 another volume of "Posthumous Works" was published by Curll, the bookseller, containing some antiquarian notes on Norwich Cathedral, under the title of "Repertorium," a short and characteristic paper entitled "Particulars of some Urns found in Brampton Field," a short correspond-

ence with Sir William Dugdale, and several miscellaneous essays similar in character to those previously printed by Archbishop Tenison.

Four years after the publication of this volume, Browne's daughter, Mrs. Littleton, gave to the press another of her father's unpublished works, the discourse on "Christian Morals," which was subsequently reprinted with a memoir by Dr. Johnson, and is the source whence Cowper derived much of his inspiration. It differs from Browne's other works in being much less eloquent, and in exhibiting very little imagination; but it is marked by a lofty tone and a just appreciation of the true grounds on which moral obligations rest.

Some previously unpublished papers, beside extracts from his commonplace books, and a very extensive correspondence with the members of his own family and other persons, are contained in Mr. Wilkin's edition of his works. Of these papers it is only necessary to say that the correspondence is perhaps the least interesting series of letters that we have ever met with, and that it throws very little light either on the personal history and character of Sir Thomas Browne, or on the public transactions of the stormy period during which he lived. It is true that his own letters afford occasional glimpses of his mode of life, and sometimes show what subjects occupied his thoughts. But most of them are hard reading, and those addressed to him are equally uninteresting. A few characteristic passages from his letters to his children are all that need be quoted here. In a letter to his youngest son, who was then in France, he writes: "Hold fast to the Protestant Religion, and be diligent in going to church when you have any little knowledge of the language. God will accept of your desires to serve him in his public worship, though you cannot make it out to your desires; be constant, not negligent, in your daily private prayers, and habituate your heart in your tender days unto the fear and reverence of God." In another letter to the same he writes: "I would be glad you had a good handsome garb of your body, which you will observe in most there, and may quickly learn if you cast off *pudor rusticus*, and take up a commendable boldness, without which you will never be fit for anything, nor able to

show the good parts which God has given you. I would think it very happy if you had more Latin, and therefore advantage yourself that way if possible; one way beside learning from others will be to read the Scripture or chapters thereof daily in French and Latin, and to look often upon the grammars in both languages." To his oldest son, who was travelling on the Continent, he writes: "Have always some physic treatise to read often, lest this variety of objects unsettle the notions of it." In another letter he advises his son to "take notice of the various animals, of places, beasts, fowls, and fishes; what the Danow affordeth, what depth, if conveniency offers; of mines, mineral works, &c." And finally he asks him in another letter to "inquire what tree that is of which they make musical instruments; a white waved wood which is called *ayre*, and said to come from Germany."

For our knowledge of his personal character and habits we are mainly indebted to the brief sketch drawn up after his death by his friend, the Rev. John Whitefoot, who had been intimately acquainted with him for more than forty years. A few touches may also be added from different parts of his own writings. He was of moderate size, of a dark complexion, and, if we may judge from his portrait, of a modest and amiable expression. His dress was somewhat peculiar, and he wore a cloak and boots even when few other persons did, and always took care to be warmly clad. Both by nature and education he was disinclined to a public life and to social enjoyments; and his usual appearance seems to have been that of a grave and thoughtful person. "He was never seen to be transported with mirth, or dejected with sadness," says Mr. Whitefoot; "always cheerful, but rarely merry, at any sensible rate; seldom heard to break a jest; and when he did, he would be apt to blush at the levity of it. His gravity was natural, without affectation." In most of his religious opinions he accorded with the Church of England; but on some points he differed widely from the authorized doctrines, and on others his views were not clearly defined.

As a scholar his attainments were various and great. His memory, we are told, was good, though he seems in general to have trusted to his commonplace books, rather than to recol-

lection. He had read most of the great historians of ancient and modern times, and was familiar with the earlier and later Latin poets, beside having a critical knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages. He was also acquainted with Hebrew, and with several of the modern languages, was a good astronomer and botanist, and an excellent geographer. With the subjects that lay more immediately in the line of his studies as a physician he was thoroughly conversant; and his knowledge of natural history in particular was both extensive and remarkably accurate. Indeed, as Dr. Johnson justly remarks, "There is no science in which he does not discover some skill; and scarce any kind of knowledge, profane or sacred, abstruse or elegant, which he does not appear to have cultivated with success."

It is not easy to assign to him his exact place in English literature. On the one side his merits have been much undervalued by Mr. Hallam, who seems to have formed a very inadequate conception of the worth of his scientific researches; and on the other side the permanent interest of his writings has been scarcely less overrated by his warm admirers. It is not surprising, indeed, that there should be a great diversity of judgments as to the real merits of his works. In spite of the exactness with which his scientific experiments appear to have been conducted, he had little or no skill in framing a compact argument, or in pursuing any extended line of thought, and his writings are consequently fragmentary and episodical in their character. This defect is at once perceived by critics in whom the logical faculty predominates; and in their disappointment at finding so little unity of thought and expression in his works, they are very apt to undervalue qualities which they hold in slender esteem, but which to other persons furnish sufficient grounds of admiration. On the other hand, many readers are charmed by his gorgeous eloquence, his quaint imagery, his strong imagination, his fancy, his wit, and his learning, and are content to take these as they find them, without demanding a more methodical arrangement. They could not readily give a satisfactory account of what they have read, but they have been so strongly impressed by it as to place the writer at once in the short list of favorite authors,

and to revert to his pages with continually increasing satisfaction.

If, without adopting any extreme views as to the rank which he must hold among his contemporaries, we pass to a closer examination of his writings, we shall find abundant reasons for setting a high value on his scientific and literary labors. In spite of his disbelief in the Copernican system of astronomy, and of some other errors which he upheld, it cannot be doubted that he rendered a real service to science by the publication of the "*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*," and that he smoothed the path for subsequent inquirers. As a writer, his erudition and his eloquence are alike worthy of admiration. His best thoughts have passed into our common speech, and become as familiar as household words. No man has written more persuasively or more eloquently of the great themes which engaged his pen in the "*Religio Medici*," the "*Hydriotaphia*," and the "*Christian Morals*"; and it is not probable that these productions will ever cease to be read. A writer who has received the united applause of Johnson and Cowper, of Coleridge and Southey, of Lamb and Hazlitt, and who has, indeed, maintained his reputation with but little loss for two centuries, must always hold an honorable place in literature.

ART. VI. — *Ceremonies on Laying the Corner-Stone of the New York State Inebriate Asylum, at Binghamton, September 24, 1858.* New York. 1859. 8vo. pp. 184.

As the memorial of a new and auspicious benevolent enterprise, and as an illustration of the method and the means whereby the public welfare is secured and advanced in our country, the publication named above merits special attention. It unfolds a noble conception, and describes the beginning of a great charity. The State of New York, in addition to a most creditable array of humane institutions, similar in design and arrangement to others established all over the Union,—hospitals for the indigent victims of disease, for the blind, the deaf